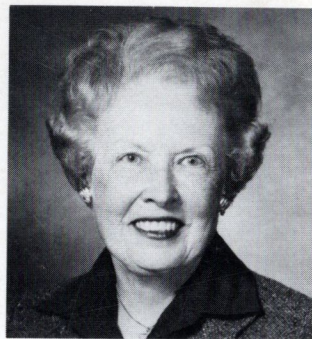




MARGARET RORKE

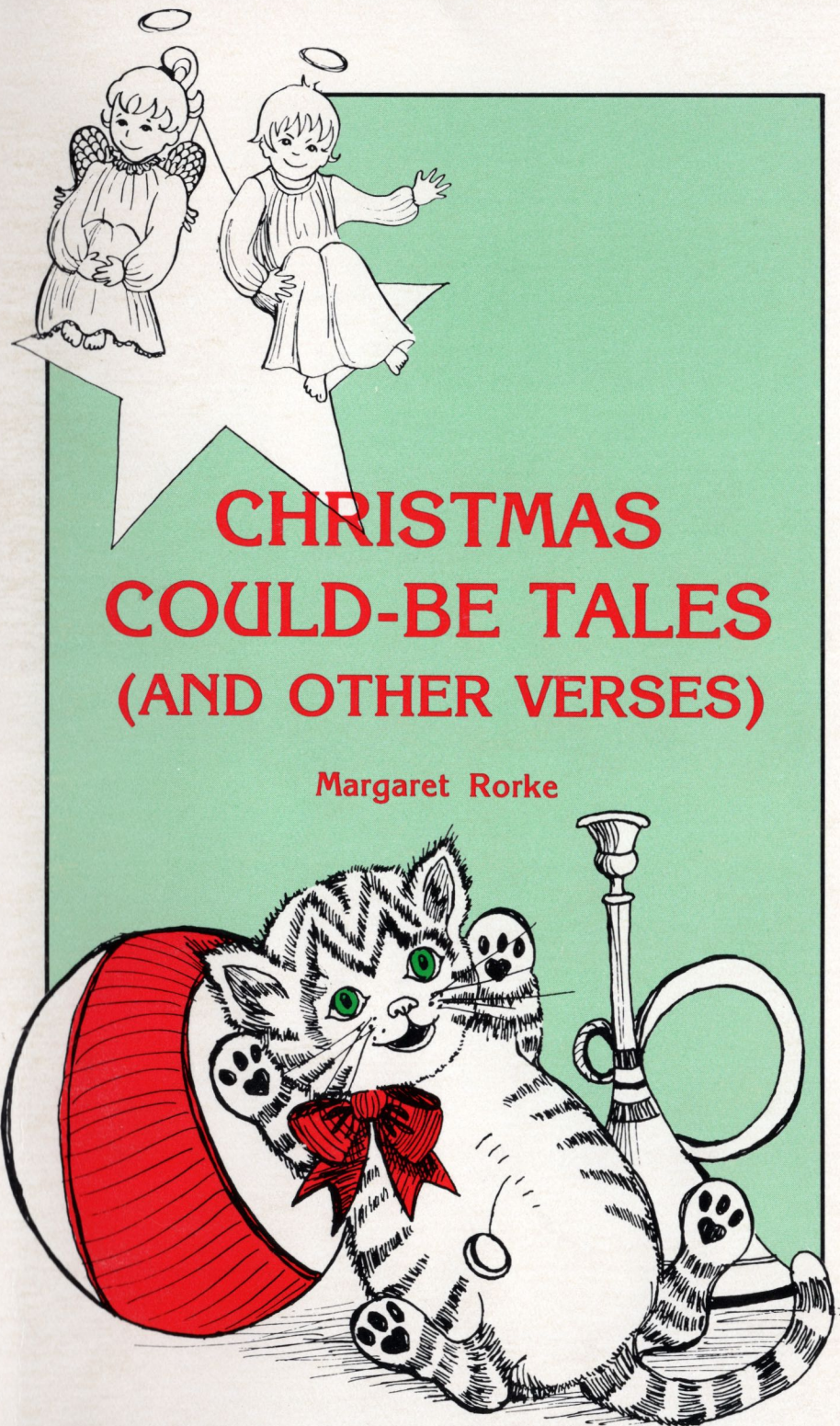
Margaret Rorke has always lived in Saginaw, Michigan. She earned her B.A. and J.D. degrees from the University of Michigan and was the first woman admitted to the Saginaw County Bar. She has also been admitted to practice before the United States Supreme Court. In 1946, she married William C. Rorke, who died in 1977. Her two children are Robert C. Rorke of Saginaw, and Margaret A. Rorke of Salt Lake City, Utah.

Margaret belongs to the Michigan State Bar Association in addition to the Saginaw County Bar. She is a member of the First Congregational Church, P.E.O. Sisterhood, Alpha Chi Omega, Saginaw Culture Club, Woman's National Farm and Garden Association, and served two terms as president of the Saginaw Zonta Club.

For twenty-two years her verse appeared regularly on the editorial pages of the Saginaw News. During the past nine years, it has frequently headed the columns of Judd Arnett in the DETROIT FREE PRESS. Her poems have also been printed in BETTER HOMES AND GARDENS, the P.E.O. RECORD, GUIDEPOSTS and other magazines. In the spring of 1981, Mrs. Rorke was featured as IDEALS Best-Loved Poet. Her poems also appear in numerous anthologies. Her first collection of verse, MY EGO TRIP, was published in 1976. A second collection of her verse, AN OLD CRACKED CUP, was published in 1980.

CHRISTMAS COULD-BE TALES (AND OTHER VERSES)

Margaret Rorke



**CHRISTMAS COULD-BE TALES
(AND OTHER VERSES)**

by

Margaret Rorke

Illustrations by Becky Litherland



NORTHWOOD INSTITUTE PRESS
Midland, Michigan 48640

TO JUDD ARNETT —

Twenty-five years a noted
columnist for the Detroit Free Press —

In appreciation for his including nearly two
hundred of my verses in his column during
the past ten years.

FIRST EDITION

c 1984 by Northwood Institute Press

All rights reserved, including the right of reproduction in whole or in part, in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. Inquiries should be addressed to Northwood Institute Press, Midland, Michigan 48640.

LCN 84-061104

ISBN 0-87359-042-2

Printed in the United States of America

Becky Litherland, Midland, Michigan artist, has added a touch of whimsy with her illustrations for the book. Mrs. Litherland graduated from the University of Southern Mississippi as an art major. She continued study with Ray Vogue in Chicago and for several years was a fashion illustrator and commercial artist in New Orleans. Turning her talent to another media, she received her Masters' Degree in Ceramics from Central Michigan University in 1983.

— Editor's Note

Margaret Rorke is as delightful and charming to know as her poetry is delightful and charming to read.

By definition:
delightful - highly pleasing;
charming - extremely pleasing.

Both the author and her work fit these definitions to perfection.

But there is more than pleasure in knowing Mrs. Rorke and her work. There is a special depth to both that gives inspiration to friend and reader alike. The love and respect she has for her family and her friends, for nature, for her country, for God and humanity, is clearly shown in her writing and in the warmth of her daily living.

It has been a pleasure to serve as editor for her 1980 volume AN OLD CRACKED CUP and for this new book, CHRISTMAS COULD-BE TALES (AND OTHER VERSES). It is a special privilege to have her as my friend.

— Virginia Morrison, Editor

CONTENTS

CHRISTMAS COULD-BE TALES

The Star of Stars	2
The Divining Donkey	4
The Wiser Wiseman	5
The Skeptical Shepherd	6
The Rebellious Shepherd	8
The Christmas Caroler	9
The Cock's Tale	10
The Christmas Bell	12
The Pine Tree	14
The Holy Holly	16
The Christmas Candle	18
The Candy Cane	20
Old Saint Nick	22
Comet Comments	24
Christmas Cookie Town	26
Toyland Tom	28
The Christmas Stocking	30
What the Mistletoe Told	32
Christmas Tree Church	33
The End Table Angel	34
The Rejected Card	35
The Christmas Spirit	36

FAITH AND FANTASY OR TWO ON A STAR..... 37

VERSES THROUGH THE YEAR

The New Year	48
A New Year Wish	48
A New Beginning	49
Inventory Time	50
Catalogue Season	51
A Man for this Season	52
The Winter Wind	52
February	53
Groundhog Day	54
The World Long Remembers	55
Man's Need	56

To Be Irish	57
Irish for a Day	58
The Show of Spring	59
Sure Signs	60
An Early Bird	61
The Key Question	62
Honk! Honk! Honk!	63
Dog-Ma	64
A Sob Sister	64
Easter — A Definition	65
Easter	65
The Easter Promise	66
The Easter Message	67
Please Trespass	68
The Beauty Bush	68
Law Day	69
Mother Month	70
One Mother's Advice	70
A Mother's Musing	71
Michigan	72
Peace Prayer	73
June	74
A Wedding Wish	75
June — the Graduate	76
Flag Day	77
Our Country's Flag	78
Your Lucky Stars	78
Freedom's Flag	79
Summer Moon	80
Summer Rain	80
Garden Club Prayer	81
How Garden Clubs Began	82
The Gardener's Prayer	83
Ours to Cherish	83
Morning	84
Janey One-Note	84
A Morning Wish	85
July	86
July in High	87
A Patriotic Heart	87
Liberty — Our Ideal	88
August Sunset	89

In Her August Apron	89
Melon Time	90
September	91
Feels Like Fall	92
Season of Qualm	93
Heady Stuff	93
October, Esq.	94
Fall-Out	94
Halloween	95
November	96
Thanksgiving	97
God's Day	98
Our Thank-You Prayer	99
Snow Time	100
December	101
Season's Greetings	102
I Love Christmas	103
Christmas Time	103
Modern Christmas	104
Christmas Prayer	104
Bit of Angel	105
The Ages of Christmas	106

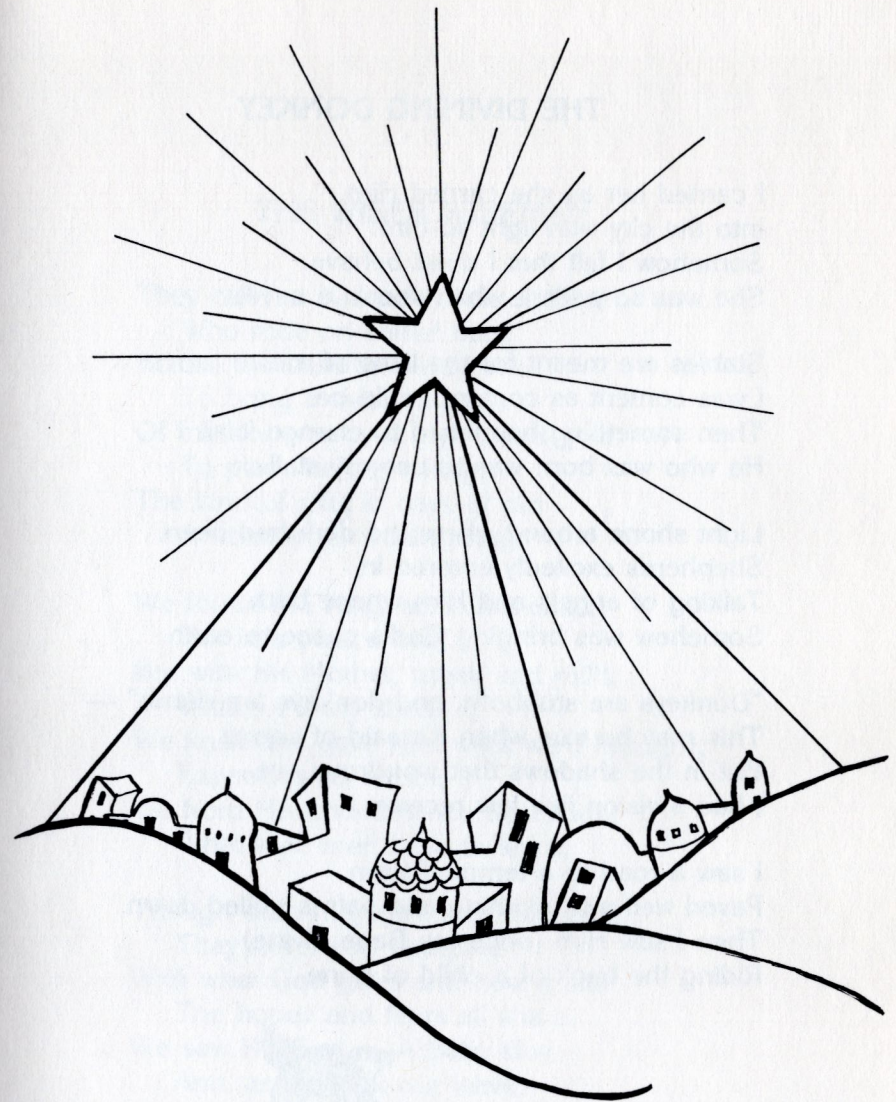
THE STAR OF STARS

We are the three
 who convened that night
So as to shine
 on the wond'rous sight.
Light of our light
 made the Star of Stars —
Jupiter, Neptune,
 and mighty Mars.

Earth must revolve
 seven hundred years
Ere this convergence
 of ours appears.
On we went rolling
 our sep'rate ways
Waiting for God
 and His day of days.

We, named for rulers
 of ancient time,
Answered the summons
 Of Him sublime ---
Forming one globe
 For the earth to see,
Sign for the faithful
 where'er they'd be.

Three who were wisemen
 beheld our glow.
We, with one beam,
 showed them where to go.
Jupiter, Neptune,
 and mighty Mars
Blended as one
 for the Star of Stars.



Onward in orbits
 that God decreed,
Singly we left,
 having filled our need,
Leaving the Light
 in the world of then,
Leaving a spark
 in the hearts of men.

THE DIVINING DONKEY

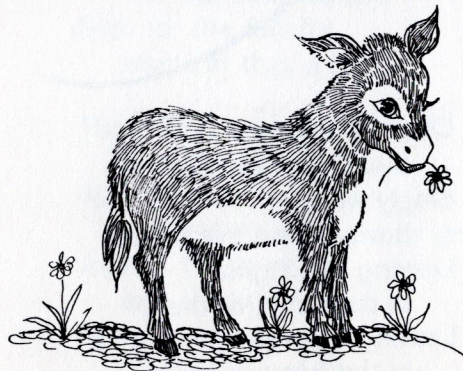
I carried her as she carried Him
Into the city with light so dim.
Somehow I felt that I must behave.
She was so patient when shown a cave.

Stables are meant for the likes of me.
I was content as content could be.
Then something happened to change it all:
He who was born was to use my stall.

Light shone around where the dark had been.
Shepherds excitedly entered in,
Talking of angels and Him whose birth
Somehow was bringing God's peace to earth.

"Donkeys are stubborn, and donkeys are dumb" —
This may be true when it's said of some;
But in the shadows that wondrous eve,
I had a vision like few receive:

I saw a road to a templed town
Paved well with clothing and palms pulled down.
Then I saw Him (once my Babe divine)
Riding the back of a child of mine.



THE WISER WISEMAN

They call me "Casper," one of three
Who rode on camel back
Across the desert's sandy sea
To bring a treasure pack
Of frankincense and myrrh and gold
To place before a king,
The kind of gifts in days of old
A worshipper would bring.

We found the King, an infant child,
Not in a palace bed,
But with His Mother, meek and mild,
Within a lowly shed.
We knelt and gave Him what we'd brought,
Expecting no return,
Yet from His countenance we caught
What wise men have to learn:

Though man may give symbolic gifts,
They never can compare
With what God gives and how it lifts
The hopes and fears all share.
We saw His Son — A Baby Boy,
And, as we took our leave,
He gave His Gift — the gift of joy
All mankind may receive.

THE SKEPTICAL SHEPHERD

Out on the hills on that first
Christmas Eve
I was the shepherd who wouldn't
believe.
I heard the angel and trembled
with fear.
Yet I was bold when the heavens
were clear.

I was the eldest and bitter
in heart,
Telling the others 'twas folly
to start
Looking for babes in the midst
of the night.
Surely we all had imagined the
sight.

Faces, though flushed by a fervor
or frown,
All were determined on Bethlehem
Town.
Grumbling and grouchy, I said
with a groan,
If they were going, I'd not
stay alone.

Finding the stable and seeing
the Child
Soothed all my rumblings so
rampantly wild.
There I felt peaceful as never
before.
There these old knees folded
down to the floor.



There in the arms of His mother
so pure
Rested God's baby. Of that
I was sure.
I was so close that His garments
I kissed.
Think what I could have so
easily missed!

THE REBELLIOUS SHEPHERD

I was young — in my teens —
As I tended the flock,
With inadequate means
To buy even a rock,
Full of hate!

I was mad at the world,
At my lot — at the sheep!
And the curses I hurled
Caused my parents to weep
O'er my fate.

Then the angels appeared
As I sat on the hill.
For a moment I feared,
And my spirit stood still.
What a sight!

When they sang as a band
Of the Glory to God,
The loose grip of my hand
Tightened up on my rod
With new might.

If to shepherds there came
Such a wonderful thing;
If to shepherds the name
Of the Almighty King

Was revealed,
Then, how could it be wrong —
This, my sheep-tending role?
I was changed by their song
To be "sheep-like" in soul,
As I kneeled.

THE CHRISTMAS CAROLER



I was the caroler God sent to earth.
I was the angel who sang of the birth
To shepherds who tended their sheep:
"Be not afraid for my song is of joy.
Bethlehem cradles a bit of a boy,
And there you will find him asleep."

"As it was promised, it now has been done.
God has begotten His singular Son.
He lies 'tween the ox and the ass.
Just as the prophets have always foretold
Him you will find in a manger's warm fold.
The wonder has now come to pass."

Harpists accompanied the message I sang.
Voices from heaven in unison rang
With words from the Father's own pen.
Lyrics sublime to outlast man and time,
Bearing the news into every clime
Of peace and good will unto men.

Then 'twas my mission to make shepherds hear.
Now I return at the Yule of each year
To touch willing tongues on the earth,
Letting them carol a song back to God,
Praising the spirit He sent to this sod
The night of the dear Savior's birth.

THE COCK'S TALE

Chanticleer all night was crowing
As he ruled a wakeful flock.
Now, I really should be knowing
'Cause my grandpa was that cock;
And this tale I've heard him telling
In a way we all believe
While his chest and throat were swelling
With his thoughts of Christmas Eve.

Now, my grandpa had been singing
With each dawning's dark and dew,
And the sun he had been bringing
From the blackness into view
Every day with faithful calling
Since his life on earth began;
So it doesn't seem appalling
That he fitted in the plan.

Grandpa said he heard the horses
And the beasts of field and wood
Speak in most profound discourses
And be fully understood.
Yes, indeed, he heard them saying
They saw Jesus in a shed
And had knelt beside Him praying
While He lay where cattle fed.



Since the dawn of hope was rising
As the sun that starts the day,
It is not a bit surprising
That my grandpa crowed that way,
Or that I'm so proud of bearing ---
Always strutting down the line.
Very few have grandpas sharing
In a moment so divine.

THE CHRISTMAS BELL

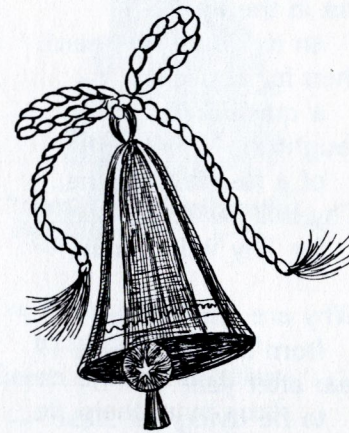
I heard a bell on Christmas Day
Speak out in such a holy way
I paused to hear what it might say.

In tones resounding ancient pride
It tolled of that first Christmastide,
Of Joseph and his virgin bride.

It said the new-born could not sleep.
Though in His Mother's gentle keep,
He somehow couldn't help but weep.

And then He heard a tinkling bell
That had the power to soothe and tell
The infant Christ that all was well.

None knows just where the bell was hung
Or by whose hands its cord was rung,
But all bells praise its sacred tongue.



Our God, thus pleased, sought not the where
Of that small tinkle in the air,
But let all bells its blessing share.

To them — the big and very small —
He gave Life's purest, sweetest call:
"A Merry Christmas — one and all!"

THE PINE TREE

Out in the forest
an ax could be heard.
Then far above it
a questioning bird
Caught the sweet sigh
of a fast falling pine,
"Thy Will be done, Lord,
for Thy Will is mine."

"Why are you chosen
from all of the trees
Year after year
to be dying for these —
These who but slay you?"
the little bird cried.
"Ah," said the pine tree
with obvious pride:

"He who was born
at this time of the year
Brought into living
its measure of cheer,
Took out of dying
all semblance of loss.
He died for these
when He died on the cross.



I've been selected
to honor his birth.
Green are my needles
all seasons of earth.
Look and you'll note
that the other trees sleep.
Thus from man's windows
they never can peep.

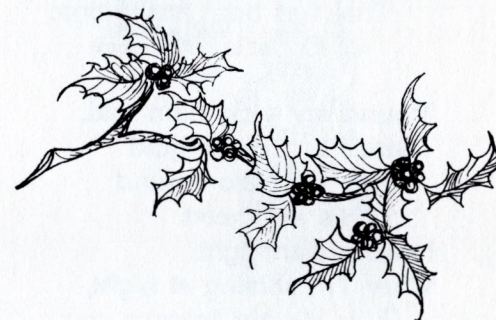
Shaped like a steeple,
I weather all strife.
I am the sign of continuous
life.
Gladly I fall to bring men
greater joy
Just as did He,
Mary's sweet baby boy."

THE HOLY HOLLY

I grew on Sinai long ago.
I saw the holy flame.
I watched while Moses in its glow
Heard God bespeak his name
And give upon two slabs of stone
Ten laws for mortal men.
Though Moses thought he was alone.
I stood beside him then.

My leaves were dull, my berries drab
In days when Pharaohs reigned, 
But late one night as by a stab
I felt I'd been ordained
To carry out divine decree
Because I knew God's will.
I'd been where I could hear and see —
I'd been on Sinai's hill.

The vestments I received that night 
Were robes of glossy green
While blood rushed into berries white
With power so serene
I felt that I'd received new birth;
And this I now believe,
For God had sent His Son to earth.
That night was Christmas Eve.



My sweet reward is beauty rare
To grace the Christmas feast;
But I've a burden I must bear —
A duty like a priest.
I must remind each festive spread
That after Christ was born
There was a day for drops of red
And crown of verdant thorn.

THE CHRISTMAS CANDLE

I was lit by His Star
As it came from afar
And dipped down
to the dimness of earth.
I'm a symbol and sign
Of the spirit divine
That was born at the time
of Christ's birth.

'Round my wick, I am told,
There's a circle of gold
Like the halo around
His wee head.
I give radiant light
When I'm shining at night,
Like His life lights
the darkness and dread.

I've a warmth quickly felt
That can soften and melt
Men like butter made hot
in a cup. 
For my finger of flame
Has one message and aim
As in silence it always
points up.



There's a magic in me.
I bring folks from the sea,
From the cities,
from countries afar:
From wherever they roam,
I can draw them back home
For in me there's
a bit of His Star.

THE CANDY CANE

There was once a candy maker
In a village in the hills
Who oft doubled for a baker
If one wished a cake with frills;
But he made a peanut brittle
That was known for miles around.
When he stirred his candy "kittle,"
Guess where children could be found?

Loving children was his failing,
If a failing it can be;
And a group was always trailing
For the "tastes" that would be free.
How he ever made a living
Those who knew him couldn't say
For they always saw him giving
All his precious wares away.

Just before one Christmas season
Early mornings he'd arise
Cause he had this special reason:
He so wanted to surprise
All the tots with a confection
In a brand new Christmas mold;
But with all his deep reflection
No new pattern would unfold.



Then one dawn this would-be treater
Had his eyes squeezed to a squint.
Lo! He'd left too near the heater
All his sticks of peppermint.
There like shepherd crooks they rested!
The old man could scarce believe
That he had what he'd requested
For the tots on Christmas Eve.

OLD SAINT NICK

Ho! Ho! I've heard you'd like the key
To how I really came to be.
It happened long ago.
Just have a chair and listen well
To what your old Saint Nick can tell,
And you'll be sure it's so.

I used to lead a lonesome life.
I had no job. I had no wife.
I really had no aim.
Then late one night this all was changed.
In fact, the world was rearranged,
Because God's baby came.

His Holy Father wanted joy
To reach to every girl and boy . . .
Too young to know Christ's worth,
And so He asked the Fairy Queen
If there was anyone she'd seen
Who'd spread it 'round the earth.



"I know an elf who owns a sleigh
That's magical in every way,"

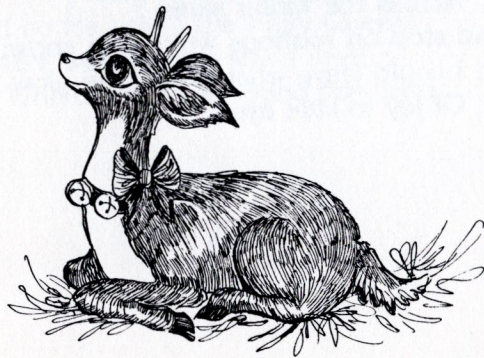
The Fairy Queen replied.
"He's very fond of girls and boys
And skillful, too, at making toys.
I'm sure he'd serve with pride."

Of course, you know I seized the chance
To let my reindeer yearly prance
Across the winter skies
And stop on rooftops white with snow;
So I could leave what brings the glow
Of joy to little eyes.

COMET COMMENTS

Oh, we see a lot of changes
As we travel year to year
Over towns and mountain ranges
In the frosty atmosphere.
I remember Dasher telling
Not too very long ago,
"Folks can change their mode of
dwelling,
But they never change the
snow."

"It's just awful," Vixen snorted,
(She's quick-tempered as can be) 
"Chimney styles have even thwarted
Getting down a Christmas tree.
I don't know how Claus can take it!"
Gruff old Blitzen 'blitzed this
answer:
"Santa always seems to make it!"
"Can't change Santa!"
pattered Prancer.



Donder roared like thunder clapping,
(Though his voice is very deep,
Not a youngster numbly napping
Has he ever roused from sleep.)
"This is truly Cupid's season,
If you heed his namesake's art!"
"Yes," said Cupid, "Change man's
reason,
But you never change his heart."

Dancer started lightly pawing
For he saw old Santa's face
And the bag that he was drawing
And was hauling into place,
"Come on, fellows, into harness!
All those youngsters who believe
Must be found in yonder farness.
There's no change in
Christmas Eve!"

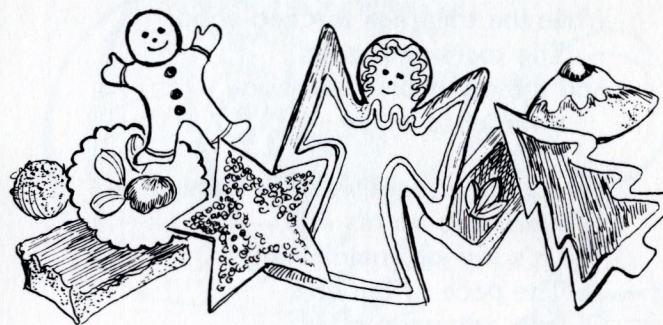
CHRISTMAS COOKIE TOWN

The Springerle spoke
to the Mincemeat Drop
As both of them sat
on the cupboard top
In the spicy kitchen air,
"I think that my pictures
turned out quite well.
The Missus was pleased.
She said I looked swell,
As she handled me with care."

The Coconut Kiss
was the next to speak,
"The whites of my eggs
made a perfect peak,
And I baked to a golden brown."
The Lebkuchen smiled
with its oblong face.
It knew, all too well,
what would soon take place
In this Christmas Cookie Town.

"This town comes to life
like a town of ghosts 
And every old timer
sits 'round and boasts
On the shelf where he's put to cool,"
The Lebkuchen said
to the Macaroon,
(Just out of the oven —
and not too soon),
"But it makes a joyous Yule!"

"I'm first to be made
so I know the score.
You're new, by a recipe
from next door;
So I feel I should bare your fate.
All diets are off
in the name of cheer;
So if you would meet
with the gang next year,
Don't get left on the cookie plate."



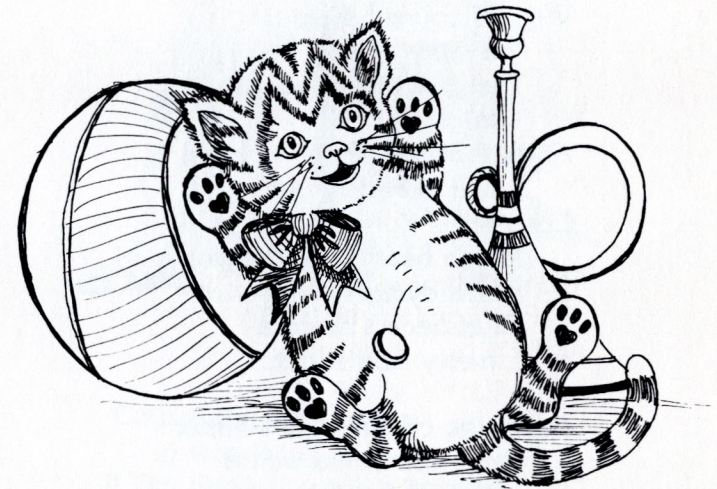
TOYLAND TOM

I'm a musical kitty
In Toyland's display,
And I head the committee
At close of the day
To provide entertainment
On counter and shelf
And to teach the attainment
Of selling oneself.

Now, it isn't so simple.
Each toy has to try.
Dainty dolls use a dimple
Or wink of an eye;
While the train has to choo-choo,
The top has to spin,
And the cry babies boo-hoo
In order to win.

Through the night we're in training —
Each one on his skill —
And it's my job maintaining
The pace of the drill.
Of their ratings in class
I'm supposed to keep track,
For a failure can't pass
Into Santa's big pack.

'Round my neck is a label.
It's why I'm so bold.
It is proof I am able.
It reads I am "sold."
So I sit, pink and yummy,
With tail tightly curled,
While the box in my tummy
Plays "Joy to the World."



THE CHRISTMAS STOCKING

Though folks used to think
it shocking
If they saw a bit of stocking
On the ankle of a lady
whom they knew;
They have never thought
it dire
If it hung before the fire
On the night when
Old Saint Nicholas was due.

Well, of course, there is
a story
That has put us socks
in glory,
And I thought, perhaps, you'd
like to hear it out;
Long ago I hung up drying
As the hearth's warm glow
was dying.
All at once I heard a
merry little shout.

Down the chimney all a-flutter
Came old Santa with a
mutter
About having lots of houses
yet to see.
Then he left just like a
rocket,
But a hole was in his pocket,
And a toy dropped out of it
and into me.



'Course the folks began
to wonder
If Old Santa'd made a blunder.
Then they thought he must
have wanted it that way;
So they hang me up each season,
And he must have guessed
the reason
Cause I'm lumpy 'til I'm limp
on Christmas Day.

WHAT THE MISTLETOE TOLD

What the Mistletoe told
As it hung o'er the door
With its leaves turning gold,
I could hardly ignore.
As though rapture and woe
Were both trampling its pride,
It exclaimed, "Do you know
I'm a Jekyll and Hyde?"

"Yes, I am. I'm a leech
With no roots in the earth.
Every tree I can reach
I just squeeze out its worth.
I was hugging an oak
Where the wind left my seed
And was plotting the choke,
But I didn't succeed.

"Now, I'm hanging instead
With my berries of white
Over everyone's head
As the sign of a rite.
By the lover I'm sought
As he pilfers a kiss.
Bet that oak never thought
I'd be treated like this!

"It's for luck, so they say
As they smack in my name.
You would think in a way
I'd be censured for shame,
But instead I preside
O'er a room full of fun,
And with bad 'Mister Hyde'
For the season I'm done."

CHRISTMAS TREE CHURCH

I'm a Christmas tree church
With a thread through my spire.
If for me you would search,
Lift your gaze a bit higher;
For I find that I go
On my once-a-year trip
To a spot just below
The big star at the tip.

And that star up above
Shines on me as by plan
Like the glow of God's love
Lights the churches of man,
And we both join in pride
As we look at the fun
Over which we preside
When this season's begun.

Every year a green tree
Is the joy of the room.
By a family spree
It is brought into bloom
With its tinsel and balls
And its bulbs of bright light
Until no one recalls
A more heavenly sight.

Though the ornaments change
As the year follows years,
None has dared rearrange
How the top star appears
Or how I shed its spark.
May we ever be thus!
Christmas trees would be dark
If they didn't have us.



THE END TABLE ANGEL

"Silent Night! Holy Night!" sweetly I sing,
Moving my body around in a ring.
I am an angel with yellow yarn locks,
Standing in place on a musical box.

I am a doll in a white satin dress —
Cheeks slightly flushed as I have to confess,
Mine is a halo of pipe-cleaner wire,
Quite unlike those that real angels acquire.

Year after year I'm returned to my place —
Ever the end table destined to grace.
I've watched the children, once guileless and small,
Grow into wisdom as years made them tall.

I am tradition. I'm sure I'd be missed
Should I not sing as I gracefully twist —
Confident always that I shall be wound:
"Silent Night! Holy Night!" — Heavenly sound!



THE REJECTED CARD

The store was closed. The folks were gone.
'Twas rather still and dark.
But someone left the nightlight on
Which lit the tabs that mark
The Christmas cards with what they cost
For those who'd like to buy.
Upon the floor one card was lost,
And it began to cry:

"A lady quickly looked at me;
Then chose the card next door.
Somehow she didn't even see
She'd dropped me on the floor.
I know I'm small and very plain 
I'm just a nickel's worth.
I show no wreath or candy cane
To tell the Savior's birth.

"No golden letters mark my face.
No rich engraving line
Has left its fine and noble trace
Upon this front of mine.
There are no ribbons — red or green —
With which I am adorned.
A Christmas star or shepherd scene
My maker must have scorned.

"But still no card could be more proud.
My message is my worth.
I wish that I might call aloud
To sound it 'round the earth.
My words were writ by holy pen,
Though cheaply I am bought.
They're 'Peace on Earth. Good Will to Men' —
A truly priceless thought."

THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

I'm a funny little fellow.
I'm a sprite you cannot see.
I'm not blue or pink or yellow
Like a fairy's s'posed to be;
But I'm very influential
Right around this time of year.
Keep my secret confidential ---
I'm the spreader of good cheer.

I'm the one who fills notes fuller
When the carols warm the air.
I'm the little "wire-puller"
Who takes Santa unaware
When he sees a youngster's letter
And believes he can't comply.
I insist he read it better
'Til he finds a way to try.

Should a soul appear a stranger
I will find for him a friend,
Lest a heart send to a manger
One whose inn it ought to lend.
I make man a little blinder
To the faults of fellow folk
And his heart a whole lot kinder
With a magic I invoke.

And that magic is a story
Like no other man has read.
It's of Him the Prince of Glory
With but straw beneath His head.
I enjoy my spirit power.
Would some marvel could appear
That would stretch my joyous hour
Through all seasons of the year.

FAITH and FANTASY or TWO ON A STAR

**FAITH and FANTASY
or
TWO ON A STAR**



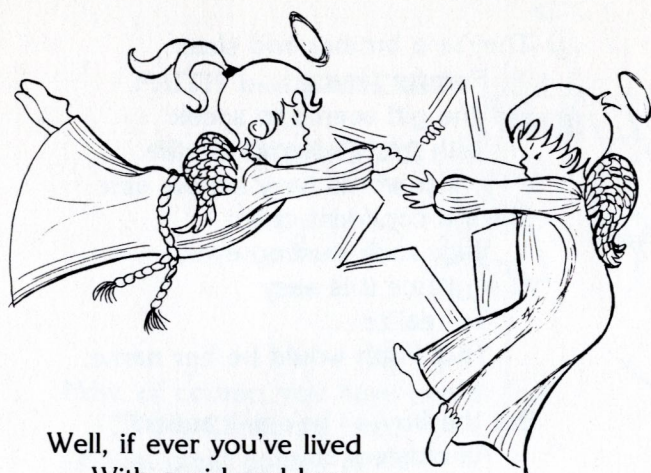
Now, of course, you have heard
Of the Christmas Star,
Of that great golden globe
From the way off far
That drew so near to earth;
Then it skimmed very low
'Til it came to stop
And to shed all its glow
On a stable top
The night of Jesus' birth.

And I'm sure you have seen
'Round this time of year
How that Star leaves its orbit
To reappear
With light for human hearts;
But I doubt if you'll hear
Anywhere you roam
Of the two little youngsters
Who call it "home"
And ride the course it charts.

They're a brother and sister,
Forever young;
But the girl seems to speak
With more solemn tongue.
Her words have simple aim.
She's a confident child
With such trusting eyes.
At a glance it is easy
To realize
That Faith would be her name.

But the boy — he's a "caution"
As oldsters say.
He's a dreamer, but yet
In a mystic way
His dreams have come to be.
He's a bit of a rogue
With a playful wink,
And it's true, as by now
You have come to think,
That he is Fantasy.





Well, if ever you've lived
 With a girl and boy,
 You're aware there are moments
 Of perfect joy,
 And moments far from fun.
 Now this pair on the Star
 Is the selfsame sort.
 They will argue and vie
 For the last retort,
 Each claiming to have won.

There was once an occasion
 When Faith declared
 That the glory of Christmas
 Should not be shared;
 That it was hers alone.
 After all, it was she
 Who foresaw Christ's birth,
 And 'twas she with the shepherds
 That night on earth
 When glory 'round them shone.



And so she said, "Now, listen, dear,"
 (Which prompted him to plug an ear)
 "I spoke to Matthew and to Luke,
 It wasn't by some fancy fluke
 They wrote the words that spread like fire —
 The words so destined to inspire
 The mind and soul of mortal man.
 'Twas I alone who had this plan.

"For me the martyrs dared to die.
 For me the pilgrims chose to ply
 An angry sea so they might be
 Where I could flourish fully free.
 This very star on which we live
 Comes close to earth so I may give
 The hope of lasting love unfurled;
 But you give nothing to the world."

"Sister," cried Fantasy, feigning pain,
 "Who paints the stripes on the candy cane?
 Who helps Saint Nick with his yearly role?
 Who built his home at the Old North Pole?
 Who made his sleigh, and just who wove his pack?
 Who smoothes the snow so there's never a track
 Leading from rooftop to chimney and back?

"Who do you think for the whole year long
 Helps with his maps so he won't go wrong,
 Cares for his reindeer until they leave
 Faster than flying on Christmas Eve?
 Oft Santa's told me how much he owes
 Just for the headlight on Rudolph's nose.
 Who had it lighted, do you suppose?

"What do you think made old Scrooge repent?
 He was converted by ghosts I sent.
 I put the sparkle in children's eyes.
 Under the ribbons I wrap surprise.
 Mistletoe's something I never miss.
 I even get 'tween the lips that kiss.
 Talk about giving, do you give like this?"

"Indeed, I don't," was Faith's reply.
 "I wouldn't ever, ever try
 To stretch what's really true.
 I only have one tale to tell,
 And I can do that very well.
 Folks have no need for you!"



They were scrapping so hard
 'Bout each other's worth
 That they missed the first part
 Of their dip toward earth,
 For Christmas time was here.
 They were stunned into silence
 By this surprise,
 And they looked down, wide-eyed,
 As they skimmed the skies.
 The world was drawing near.

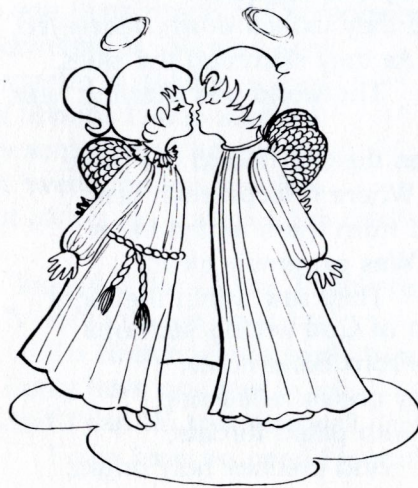
Then the Star found the place
 Where it stops each year,
 And from there all the earth
 Was extremely clear.
 They saw within the night
 Men of God writing sermons
 From Bible notes,
 Many choirs rehearsing
 With gifted throats,
 And creches holy bright.

"I told you so!" Faith promptly said
And nodded with her tossed head.

(The ride had mussed her hair.)

"You must admit for love of me
Good people pray on bended knee.
Just look at them down there!"

"Look over here, and you'll change your mind.
Marvelous playthings that I've designed
Wait to be gifts for the girls and boys
Writing to me for their Christmas toys.
I could go on, but these scenes below
Merge in a manner to clearly show
Something that both of us ought to know."



"I guess you're right," was Faith's reply.
"They need us both. I'll tell you why.
Those ones too small to trust just me
Must have the fun of Fantasy,
And should you, Brother, ease the care
Of older folks who, unaware,
Accept your magic, I'll admit
It won't hurt Christmas time a bit."

Fantasy, stunned by this leave to rejoice,
Swallowed a moonbeam that silenced his voice
'Til the great Star settled in with a jerk,
Sweeping them off to get on with their work.

How do I know that this story is true?
One of them told me. I'll let you guess who.

VERSES THROUGH THE YEAR

Many of the following poems
have appeared in the column
of Judd Arnett in the Detroit
Free Press.

THE NEW YEAR

'Twas a package left from Christmas —
Left beneath the tree a week —
One we couldn't shake or open,
Couldn't even take a peek.
Now that we've removed the wrapping,
We are still in some dismay
'Cause we can't be sure what's in it
'Til we've used up every day.

A NEW YEAR WISH

May the bright spots in the old year
Be but flickers in the dark
When compared with what the new year
Will enkindle with its spark.

A NEW BEGINNING

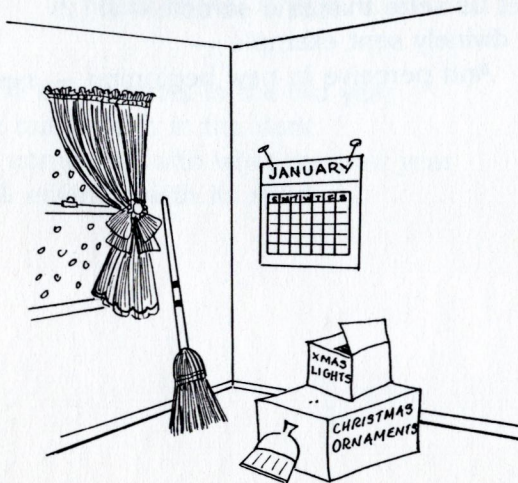
Every end's a new beginning —
With another chance for winning —
A renewal of our energy and hope.
What is over only strengthens
The connecting link that lengthens
All of living with its duties and its scope.

So it is with marching seasons:
Each in sequence has its reasons
In the purpose and intention of the Lord.
Let us seize this as a sample —
A divinely sent example —
And perceive in new beginning — new reward.

INVENTORY TIME

The tree is stripped, the needles swept,
The baubles back where they are kept,
The signs of Christmas gone.
The soul, both weary and renewed,
Takes up its mission still imbued
With warmth that lingers on.

Thus fortified we start a year
Whose future always is unclear,
And in this deep breath stop,
We count the stock upon our shelves:
Our faith, our friends, our trust in selves,
And then we open shop.



CATALOGUE SEASON

Sunflowers growing two feet wide —
A sample for a dime,
Confetti roses at their side
Near strawberries that climb,
Tomato plants and pepper kings —
It's not their growing stage?
It is where dreams plant all these things
No deeper than a page.



A MAN FOR THIS SEASON

A carrot nose, a hat of straw,
A scarf around his neck,
With features only sticks can draw
And warming weather wreck,
He peers unblinking 'cross the street,
Well-mittened out of snow,
And silently bespeaks a treat
That fairer climes can't know.



THE WINTER WIND

The winter wind filled out his cheeks
And blew and blew and blew,
As though he'd practiced many weeks,
But still the piece was new.
The tune, a wheezing, wobbly whine,
Was loud as he could get,
Reminding me when child of mine
Was taking clarinet.

FEBRUARY

Welcome the month of our heroes and hearts.
Short it may be but great truths it imparts.
Washington, Lincoln and Lindbergh were 'mong
Those it saw born and whose praises are sung.

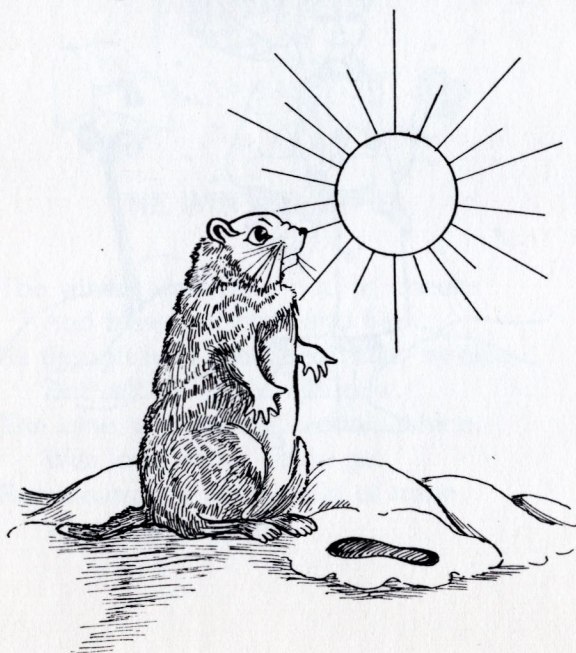
Right in the middle is planted the day
Love is enthroned in a most special way.
Little but mighty is month number two.
May it be thrilling and loving to you!



GROUNDHOG DAY

By the calendar it's reckoned
This is February second,
And the day by which
our weather is foretold.
If the groundhog gives up sleeping
And comes out for people-peeping,
There is more at stake
than he will catch a cold.

If his shadow's but a splinter,
We'll have six more weeks of winter,
And that really isn't going
to be much fun.
I propose from farm and city,
We set up a large committee
That will stand between the
groundhog and the sun.



THE WORLD LONG REMEMBERS

So many men in public roles
Claim bits of Lincoln in their souls
Inherited by deep desire
To be like him whom they admire.

For all these years the words he wrote
Are those they paraphrase or quote.
The test by fire that found him pure
Is what they prove "can long endure."

It's much as if these sons who strive
Are destined e'er to keep alive
The thoughts and deeds of him whose rod
Preserved this "nation under God."

So let them tell how they compare
To him. That way we're kept aware
Of those great qualities of worth
That must "not perish from the earth."

MAN'S NEED

Just to need to be needed by someone
Is the whole of man's mission on earth.
It's the total — the sum of his purpose.
It's the ultimate goal of his worth.

In a world that is wanting in freedom,
In a nation with pockets of poor,
In a city with problems a-plenty,
There is need for man's goal — to be sure.

There is need on the busiest homefront.
There is need where it's quiet and lone.
He who finds him a spot where he's needed
Fills the paramount need of his own.

TO BE IRISH



You don't have to be Irish
To like Kelly green
Or in girls to be seeking
A bit of Colleen.
To be fonder of shamrock
Than tulip or rose,
You don't have to be Irish.
That anyone knows!

You don't have to be Irish
To see the wee folk
Or to give with the blarney
Or relish a joke.
To enjoy what is wistful
About a sweet tune,
You don't have to be Irish.
Get with it and croon!

You don't have to be Irish
To see in a smile
The reflection of heaven,
The fair Em'rald Isle.
To be proud — to be testy,
Yet give friends "your shirt,"
You don't have to be Irish,
But how can it hurt?

IRISH FOR A DAY

Let's be Irish for a day!
In the spirit of St. Pat
Wear some green in such a way
Folks will fathom "where it's at."
Tell a good old Blarney tale,
Hum a tune or give a smile —
Like the kind they say prevail 
Only on the Em'rald Isle.
Let the wee folk whet your wit.
Listen for the Auld Sod name.
Though "the troubles" never quit,
There's a magic just the same
That's imported 'round the Earth
And imbued in such a way —
Those who fail by fact of birth
Can be Irish for a day.

THE SHOW OF SPRING

Earth is moving front and center
So's to cheer when Spring will enter
And present her magic show.
Underground there's hocus pocus
That will soon produce a crocus,
And the daffodils will grow.
There is one thing very certain:
We are eager for the curtain,
We who've waited while she slept.
We believe her lofty billing.
It is sorcery that's thrilling,
And a promise always kept.

SURE SIGNS

Much like a piece of falling sky,
A bit of blue goes winging by.

The breath of every passing breeze
Gives CPR to budding trees.

The sun is longer now awake
To melt the river and the lake.

Warm rains produce a shower bath
For fields and lawn and garden path.

The human shoot its sweater sheds
To catch the cold its mother dreads.

Resplendent in their rainbow hues,
The silent tulips shout the news:

"Old Winter's given up his fling,
And Earth is in the arms of Spring."

AN EARLY BIRD

The north wind blew his final heave
Upon the warming earth
And watched to see how we'd receive
His weird attempt at mirth.

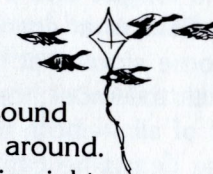
A robin hopped across the street
At brisk staccato clip
As though he wished he'd had cold feet
Before his northward trip.



THE KEY QUESTION

The birds seem tuning up to sing
A chorus to a full-fledged spring.
I listen to those gifted throats,
Unerring in their music notes,
And wonder if, akin to me,
One ever warbles out of key —
And how the bird world treats that fact.
Is he ejected from its act
Or is it patient with his song —
Enough to let him sing along.

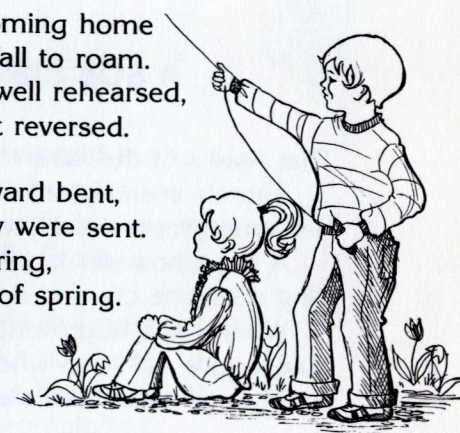
HONK! HONK! HONK!



Quite suddenly a raucous sound
Made me look up and turn around.
Against the sky there hove in sight
The outline of a flying kite.

The goose brigade was coming home
From where it chose last fall to roam.
The forward part seemed well rehearsed,
But stragglers got their act reversed.

Still, as a group, all northward bent,
They knew the reason they were sent.
Without a tail or anchor string,
They gave the surest sign of spring.



DOG-MA

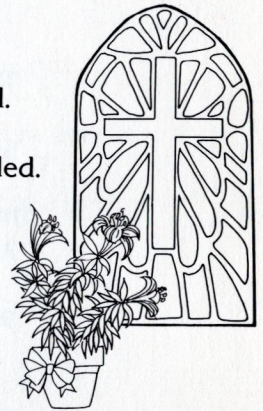
A big pink tongue and a wagging tail —
Regardless what comes between —
Are welcome signs that can rarely fail
To melt the most hostile scene.
He's lord of all — both the old and young —
Whose hearts he can soon impale
On pants of love from a big pink tongue
And swipes from a wagging tail.

A SOB SISTER

That April's of the fairer sex
There's scarcely any doubt.
Her varied moods are prone to vex
A heart however stout.
Why does she cry and seem so sad
When earth is growing fair?
'Cause girls oft weep when they are glad.
They're made with tears to spare.

EASTER — A DEFINITION

It's the day of resurrection 
It's the promised hope fulfilled.
It's mortality's reflection
On life's nagging question stilled.
It's renewal in our thinking,
As renewal wakes the sod,
And sublimity in linking
All life's ages unto God.



EASTER

The Star that beckoned to the Wise
Does not soothe pain and loss
Like looking up with trusting eyes
Upon the Holy Cross.

A borrowed grave saw greater birth
Than did the stable stall.
In it was born the hope of earth:
The Easter promised all.

THE EASTER PROMISE

The Easter promise man has heard
Almost two thousand years.
In written or in spoken word
This promise has no peers.

At dawn on every Easter morn
We shed our sense of doom.
We know He's risen and reborn
Before we reach the tomb.

We've heard the angel oft repeat
That He has gone ahead.
We've seen the empty winding sheet
Removed by One not dead.

Though many years retell the tale,
It never finds us bored.
The promise will not fade or fail.
We have a living Lord!

THE EASTER MESSAGE

Of all the words that have been said
Throughout recorded time
The angel's news: He is not dead!
Is, doubtless, most sublime.
It underscores Christ's work and worth.
It proves His promise true, 
And offers hope to all on earth
Like nothing else can do.

Apostles bowed by loss and grief,
By shaken faith and fear,
Sought evidence before belief
Like many now and here.
He gave them proof — the proof we heed
On every Easter Day —
The proof Christ lives and is, indeed,
The Truth, the Life, the Way.

PLEASE TRESPASS

The songbirds are back
And are staking their claims.
Their deeds always lack
True descriptions and names.
Their bound'ries, I'm told,
One can clearly define;
And I'll never scold
If they overlap mine.

THE BEAUTY BUSH

In early spring she's ugly.
As bushes go, she's old.
But soon her pale pink blossoms
In sweet cascade unfold.

As winter cold approaches,
Snow coats her bony frame
Until she stands in glory,
A tribute to her name.

For me she is a model —
An ever present test:
She takes what nature gives her
And wears it to her best.

LAW DAY

Dear God, of whom we stand in awe —
You give us liberty and law
To keep that liberty restrained.
Help us to feel we're but its tools:
That it's the law that really rules —
And keep its majesty maintained.

Bless those who labor in its cause —
Who take today this worthwhile pause
To guide and teach our eager youth
The better way to govern man,
The perfect hope, the master plan —
The law of justice and of truth.

MOTHER MONTH

May is the mother month, warming the earth.
Watch as she nurses and cuddles new birth,
Washes the morning and hangs it to dry,
Dusts with young branches the blue of the sky,
Blows on the buds till the blossoms unfold,
Warns the wee fledglings to do as they're told.
Yes, she's the mother month, and we will find
Ere she is done, she'll make all of us mind.

ONE MOTHER'S ADVICE

Bring on the candy, the flowers, the cards.
Send me the sentiment of your regards.
I am old-fashioned. I've been all my life,
And I've enjoyed being mother and wife.
Hang on to your pedestal, Moms of today.
Don't let the cynical kick it away.
You're as important as you want to think.
Who to the future is life's better link?

A MOTHER'S MUSING

If you're bent on liberation,
Having heirs won't set you free.
Of a life of adulation
There's no certain guarantee.
There are only bits of glory
As you trip the whole expanse
From the nightly bedtime story
To the graduation dance;
But, when all of it is reckoned
And life's choices had their say,
I wouldn't trade a second
Of my memories today.

MICHIGAN

Now, if you and your relation
Want a picturesque vacation,
 Want to see the summer sights —
Want to fish or golf or travel
Where your tensions can unravel —
 Want the country air or city lights —
Want historic scenes or sandy beaches,
Want to cherry-pick — or peaches,
 What is causing you to wait?
Dress you up or just go sloppy.
Take your map and your jalopy
 And come find it in our wondrous state.

PEACE PRAYER

Dear God, we pray that struggle cease;
That some new way bring lasting peace
 Into a warring world.
For most of man's recorded time
Against himself he's waged this crime —
 Since stone for stone was hurled.

Each age sends forth its bloom of youth
To die for some disputed truth,
 Each lends a newer tool —
A better weapon to employ
To better ravish and destroy
 And be a bit more cruel.

God, stop us 'lest there be no earth
On which to give destruction birth.
 Show each of us the way
To alter what's been ever thus,
And make this way a part of us
 Who pray to You today.

JUNE — THE GRADUATE

The world awaits to give its boon
Unto a graduated June.
The lines of mortarboard and gown
Sedately march in every town
To strains of "Pomp and Circumstance"
Before a fond parental glance.

'Tis June that represents our youth —
Our hope that fundamental truth
To them its secrets will impart
In fields of science, law and art.
Salute the passing year — half grown-
Whose future will control our own.

FLAG DAY

Let's preserve our adoration
For a Yankee Doodle nation —
For a country that is
glorious and grand.
Let our pride forever bubble
Over faults and fears and trouble,
And our hearts keep ever
striking up the band.

If we grow so wise and weary
That we only see the dreary
And allow our love for
countrymen to sag,
We will lose our birthright spirit:
So let's shout so all can hear it:
"Happy Birthday, dear Old Glory,
Grand Old Flag!"



OUR COUNTRY'S FLAG

Don't let her sag! Don't let her lag!
Salute her! She's our country's flag.
She's young and bold in every fold
That tells the breeze of freedom's hold.
On those who grope for signs of hope
She shines her stars of boundless scope.
Her days of yore — their peace and war
Are told in stripes forevermore.
Don't let her sag! Don't let her lag!
Salute her! She's our country's flag.

YOUR LUCKY STARS

From fifty stars for fifty states
Upon a field of blue,
There's one whose very special traits
Have won the heart of you.
But, as the flag goes flapping by
Or welcomes you in sight,
You can't pick out your star — and why?
It blends to shed its light.

It takes all fifty to command
Respect around the world,
To show the virtues of our land,
The better way unfurled.
Look hard at nations 'round the earth
Where man for progress spars,
Where you might be by chance of birth,
And thank your lucky stars.

FREEDOM'S FLAG

Above the land that's answered best
Man's prime and universal quest,
There flies in red and white and blue
A banner for the world to view.

'Tis more than cloth where'er it's blown,
As we are more than flesh and bone.
Our past — our future hope — it holds
Within its freely flapping folds.

This symbol we salute today.
Then look beyond to God and pray:
Oh, let our children's children brag
They, too, look up to freedom's flag!

SUMMER MOON

The ghostly queen of the summer night
Turns up the wick of her lovely light
So's best to see all the world below,
Clean washed and dried by its pallid glow.
As she looks down from her throne on high,
We stare back up to the boundless sky
And muse a bit 'bout the better scene:
Our view or that of the ghostly queen.

SUMMER RAIN

The sky is crying mighty tears.
It mourns the absent sun,
Which will return when clouding clears
And gets its sobbing done.
'Tis like us mortals when we fret
With puffed and dripping eyes —
When we, ourselves, and our regret
Are what conceal the prize.

GARDEN CLUB PRAYER

Dear God,

In the Garden of Eden
You planted all life
With its fruits and its flowers —
A man and his wife.
In Gethsemane's garden, 
Your Son knelt to pray
For He knew in a garden, 
You weren't far away.
So it is with your daughters
Who meet in this room,
Bound together by interest
In beauty and bloom.
We're aware of Your presence
In all things that grow.
Bless our efforts to know You
And to help others know
Where life's loveliness leads us
And tensions decrease.
If the world were a garden,
We'd all be at peace.
— Amen

HOW GARDEN CLUBS BEGAN

What I am saying you can't deny.
No one is certain — not even I 
But I have heard, and, as women will,
What I have heard I shall have to spill.

'Mong those in heaven, quite near the throne,
Was an old gard'ner who'd grunt and groan
When, once a year,, he would mark his birth 
Viewing the gardens he loved on earth.

Ladies were cutting what ought to grow,
Helping the weeds which they didn't know,
Letting the bugs eat the plants and trees.
Aphid and blight lived a life of ease.

Turning to God from this scene of need,
Softly the gard'ner was heard to plead,
"Father, save earth from those female dubs 
Make up a seed for some garden clubs."

God made the seed, and the gard'ner hurled
Clubs with a purpose upon the world.
Doubt that he's pleased with the job he's done?
I surely don't! I belong to one.

THE GARDENER'S PRAYER

For gardeners who would cultivate
In world-wide fields today,
Please keep our rows of thinking straight
And help us prune away
The blight of bias from each shoot
With hands that will not cease
Until they reap the glory fruit
Of everlasting peace.

OURS TO CHERISH

Who blends the blues of sky and sea
And grows the green in grass and tree,
Who multicolors wings,
Must when He gives this living scene —
All dewdrop fresh and holy clean —
Help us preserve these things.

MORNING

All's garbed in gray and saintly still
As day begins to yawn
And breathe dim light on vale and hill
To herald in the dawn.
Then chirping starts from every bird
In every single tree.
What's going on? Why are they stirred?
The sun comes up to see.

JANEY ONE-NOTE

I listened as a morning bird
Went on and on with just one word.
One syllable in monotone
Repeated in a constant drone.
I closed the sash to still the sound —
Then wondered if some text profound
Was being spilled upon the earth,
Some tract of monumental worth,
Some find o'er which a bird could brag —
Or if she simply was a nag.

A MORNING WISH

May I find a bit of beauty
In the bound'ry of today.
May along the path of duty
Something lovely grace the way.
Maybe nature holds a present
Or a friend will share a thought
Or an hour be more pleasant
For an inspiration caught.
Beauty often wears disguises —
Some light-hearted, some profound:
But to find its sweet surprises,
One must pause and look around.

JULY

July is a patriot.
See him salute!
His is an ardor
That's hard to refute.
Always he talks of
Sweet liberty's birth
Bringing to mankind
The best hope of earth.

July wears the colors
So dear to his land,
Marches down Mainstreet
Ahead of the band,
Picnics on hotdogs
And Mom's apple pie:
Really as months go,
July's quite a guy!



JULY IN HIGH

The rolling year has shifted gear,
And summer's into high.
The corn and wheat enjoy the heat.
All nature loves July.

This month, part spring, has hope to bring
For growth in field and man. 
This month, part fall, portends to all
God's changing changeless plan. 

A PATRIOTIC HEART

A throbbing music stirs the air,
A rhythmic sound beyond compare.
'Tis said it took its start
When independence was declared
And courage rose and proudly bared
Its patriotic heart.

The pulse of earth began to beat,
Denying discord and defeat.
A nation stood apart
And fought a war to make it free
And give to us its legacy:
A patriotic heart.

Now blares a racket so unfurled
It wraps around a troubled world
'Til ears of mortals smart.
Let not its volume grow so fast
That we can't hear above the blast
Our patriotic heart.

LIBERTY — OUR IDEAL

Oh, Liberty's a lady — fair
In form, in speech, in mind.
She's chosen us with whom to share
The virtues she designed.
She's more than stone to guard a gate
With torch and sightless eyes.
Her soul determines mortal fate.
Her spirit's still the prize.

Akin to Mother of us all,
She teaches us to yearn,
To answer aspiration's call,
To labor and to learn;
To lift our thoughts and deeds above
Unfair constraints that be.
Bless her this day, Great Source of Love —
Our Lady of the Free.

AUGUST SUNSET

A blazing, molten coin descends
Into the far horizon's slot.
That's how the great machinery vends
Another day that's steaming hot.

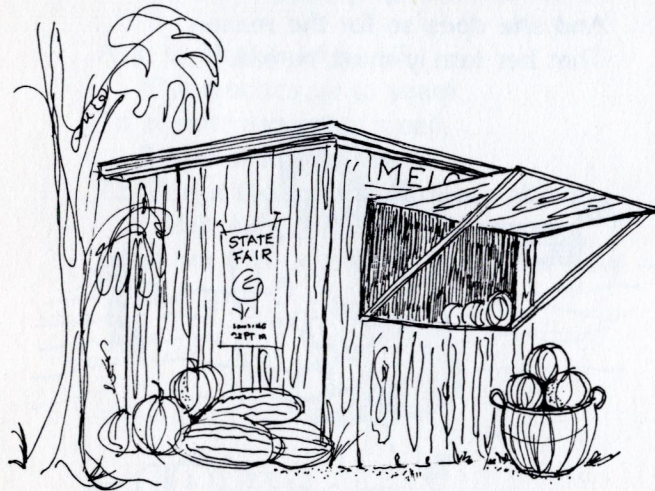
IN HER AUGUST APRON

Mother Earth is sunshine tawny
As she stoops 'neath August skies,
And, with bare arms brown and brawny,
Gathers up the vast supplies
That have blessed the summer season
In her apron fully spread,
And she does so for the reason
That her fam'ly must be fed.



MELON TIME

A sweet aroma — a perfume
Like some rare blossoms in full bloom
Excites the salivary glands
That pause before the roadside stands.
Ambrosia growing in our clime
In Michigan at melon time!
Oh, what a treasure! What a treat
To slice that golden flesh and eat
To heart's content and tummy's fill.
Then store the memory until
A year again attains its prime:
Our Michigan at melon time!



SEPTEMBER

The year is in its afternoon.
The summer's spent and much too soon
For those the school bells call.
The stubble on the farmer's field
Shows he's shaved off the harvest yield,
And we smell fumes of fall.

The earth turns slowly from the sun.
The signs are sensed and change begun.
All nature is aware.
This prelude to the autumn song
Is written as a "sing along"
For all the world to share.



FEELS LIKE FALL

The shorter days have changed our phase.
I bid you look around.
The nights so cool make mornings drool
Upon the thirsty ground.
Small bits of red and orange are fed
Into the leafy trees.
Birdlife expands to fly in bands
Against a southern breeze.

The people call, "It feels like fall!"
And we return the shout,
As spiders spin and webs begin
To round the corners out.
The squirrels race with nut-filled face
To fend the winter clime,
Or is their goal to dig a hole
To bury summertime?



SEASON OF QUALM

Bright leaves are flaking off the trees
Like pages in a breathless breeze.
The birds, confused by warming air,
Debate their southern love affair.
The puzzled bush begins to bud
With verdant but unseasoned blood.
The sky — a misty violet blue,
The earth baptized with chilly dew,
The sun's descending ball of flame —
All seem to waver much the same.
Ahead comes winter down the track,
But Nature can't help looking back.

HEADY STUFF

The morning mists and heavy fog
Dilute pure grandeur to a grog
That man may swallow to his fill
And know life's inexpensive thrill.

OCTOBER, ESQ.

October is a wealthy gent
Who's reaped what other months have spent.
His watch fob hangs as to adorn
A belly filled with golden corn.
A saffron stubble coats his face
Where harvesting has taken place.
The morning smoke that leaves his pipe
Completes him as the magnate type.

FALL-OUT

The wind, extending puffy cheeks,
Blows gusts that it has stored for weeks,
Quite thoughtlessly — without regard
For what has been a well-raked yard.
Like death and taxes, all must share
Dry leaves until the trees are bare.
Small wonder that we've learned to call
This close of autumn simply "fall."

HALLOWEEN

He with the brains of a spicy pie
Winks with his candle at passersby,
Keeping the secret of who is who
Out on the night in a motley crew.



Pirates are searching for treasure sweet,
Breathlessly calling out, "Trick or Treat."
Black cats and witches and toothless hags
All come equipped with their gaping bags.

Convoyed and timid, the new recruits
Nourish this custom's archaic roots.
Those now too grown-up to thus explore
Get to stay home and to tend the door.

NOVEMBER

The "wind month" of the Saxon year —
That derivation's loud and clear
And just as pertinent today
As when its authors first held sway.

The winds that blow through leafless trees
Are warmed for all of our TV's
By twang and brogue and lisp and drawl
That promise everything to all.

And when, at last, the winds subside
And with our choices we abide,
No matter who has lost or won,
There is "thanksgiving" that it's done.



THANKSGIVING

With harvest in to fill man's need,
The year from seed to bloom to seed
Now settles down to sleep.
A sense of having done its best
Provides contentment for its rest —
A sweet reward to reap.

Upon this day for feast and prayer,
Reviewing what we're pleased to share,
May each of us recall
How good is gleaned from planted fields
And love provides surprising yields —
And thank Him for it all.

GOD'S DAY

We turn to Him the whole year long
When we're in need or things go wrong.
If for ourselves we cannot fend,
Upon His guidance we depend.

Ofttimes, I fear, when things are fair,
We may forget that He is there, 
Parentally, He then will bless
The bows of our "self-made" success.

We celebrate all kinds of days
To single out for love and praise
Assorted folks: so 'twould be odd 
To not have one for thanks to God.

OUR THANK-YOU PRAYER

Dear Lord, We give You thanks today
For blessings through the year:
For guiding us along the way
With more of hope than fear,
With more of love than pain or hate,
With more of faith than doubt,
With gentle goads on which we wait
And cannot do without.

We thank You for the gathered fruit,
For grain and all that grows
Where liberty has taken root;
For snowflake and for rose;
For family and cherished friends
Whose daily lives we share.
Oh, You on whom all this depends,
Accept our thank-you prayer.

SNOW TIME

In headdress fully feathered, bright —
Chief Autumn's watched the campfire light 
He's mused 'bout when he was a brave
And acted as most youths behave.
The fading flames let us detect
A weathered face, a tribe's respect.
His battle for the year is done
With skirmishes both lost and won.
That fragrant smoke so slow to climb
Is from the pipe he's shared with Time.
He lifts the bonnet from his brow.
The hair is soft and white and now.



DECEMBER

"Dessy" isn't something
you would call him to his face.
Grumpy old December would
regard it a disgrace.
Proud of his dominion
Over biting winds and snow,
Only his exterior
does he want the world to know.
"Macho" is his watchword,
but before his days depart,
We will all discover
he has Christmas in his heart.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

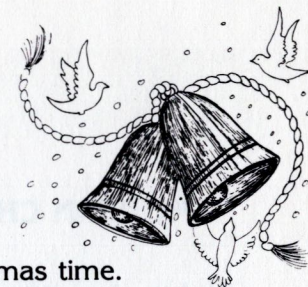
Oh, wherever you are,
May the light of the Star
Shine its glow in your eyes.
May it lead you in thought
As it did those who sought,
In their wisdom, the Wise.



May the angel song still
Echo "Peace and Good Will;"
So in spirit you'll start
Toward the over-booked inn
With a will to begin
Finding room in your heart.

May the symbols of joy:
Wreath and tree, bell and toy,
Blend to furnish you cheer
And prepare you the way
To a great Christmas Day
And a Happy New Year.

I LOVE CHRISTMAS



I love the bells at Christmas time.
Somehow they have a sweeter chime
At closing of the year.
I love to watch the burning wick
That points above a candle stick.
It glows with greater cheer.

I love the smell of spice and pine
That only Christmas can combine
In fragrance truly rare.
I love to hear the carols sung
And greetings from a friendly tongue
That spread the joy we share.

I love to think God felt man worth
The goal of love and peace on earth,
And that I have a part,
If I allow myself to take
The time and energy to make
A stable of my heart.

CHRISTMAS TIME

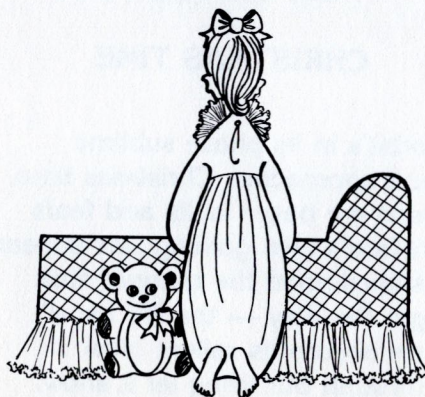
Our orbit's in its phase sublime
When it approaches Christmas time.
Eclipsed are baser faults and fears
When God's own guiding star appears
And shines upon the manger stall
To light the Way — the life for all.
May we absorb its salient glow
And through our living let it show.

MODERN CHRISTMAS

'Mid the bombers that fly
And the planes on the wing,
Let's make room in the sky
For the angels to sing
To the Glory on high
And the birth of the King.

CHRISTMAS PRAYER

We who belong to the Christmas throng
Still strain our ears for the angels' song.
Let them return and the heavens spill
Peace on the earth and on men good will.
Though in our lives we have varied roles,
Help us be Wisemen with Shepherd souls,
Each seeking Love, born for all to share.
This, Gracious Lord, is our Christmas prayer.



BIT OF ANGEL

There's a little bit of angel
To be found in every soul,
And it surfaces at Christmas
To promote the season's goal.
It adds sweet notes to the carols.
It betwinkles children's eyes,
And it nimbles flying fingers
As they conjure up surprise.

It's this little bit of angel
That makes Christmas mem'ries sweet
And the story of the Christ child
Such a pleasure to repeat.
May your little bit of angel
Blend with others in a way
That will bring you peace and promise
And a Merry Christmas Day.

THE AGES OF CHRISTMAS

It isn't just a special day
That thrills us once a year.
Each adds to each in such a way
That each becomes more dear.
The little child so bright of eye. 
Surrounded by Earth's love,
Imagines Santa riding by
Beneath the star above.
His parents see God's gift to Earth
As Wisemen saw the soul.
They know the miracle of birth.
They've cherished Mary's role.
The folks to whom long mem'ries bring
What the Shepherd hearts can't scorn, 
Rejoice to hear the angels sing,
"A Savior is born!"